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THE WORK OF A SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA HISTORIAN

BY ELVA E. MURRAY

Mr. James M. Guinn, one of the twenty-two men who founded the Historical Society of Southern California, November 1, 1883, is the only one of the founders now connected with the Society. To Mr. Guinn the Society is indebted not only for his long and untiring efforts in the upbuilding of the organization, but for a vast number of valuable contributions to its annual publications, while Southern California has found in him one of its foremost historians.

A delightful visit one afternoon with Mr. Guinn, at his home in Highland Park, revealed a number of interesting facts concerning his long and active life.

Mr. Guinn is not a native son, but was born in Ohio, on November 27, 1834. At nineteen years of age he was teaching school, and after two years of alternate teaching and farming, he entered Antioch College, whose president was at that time Horace Mann.

When the Civil War broke out, Mr. Guinn had been a student at Oberlin College for four years. Fourteen members of his class responded to the first call of President Lincoln and went to the front as Company C of the Seventh Ohio Volunteers. He was with his regiment in every campaign, was in five great battles and was one of six who came out uninjured at the battle of Cedar Mountain. But the war had, to a certain extent, impaired his health, for when the Governor of Ohio promoted him to a Captaincy in a new regiment in 1864, he had to decline the honor. Instead, he came to California, by way of Panama, and engaged in teaching school in Alameda County.

The next three years Mr. Guinn spent in gold mining in Idaho, and, after going back to Ohio, came to Southern California, where he has since resided.

In 1869 he became principal of the school in the pioneer settlement of Anaheim, and held this position for twelve years. During most of this time he was also a member of the County Board of Education.

During his principalship in Anaheim he was married to Miss Dapsileia Marquis, a teacher in his own school, and the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, who was also a pioneer of California.

In 1870 he assisted in organizing the first Teachers' Institute ever held in this county. (At that time Orange and Los Angeles counties were not separated.)

In 1875 he was nominee of the "anti-monopoly wing" of the Re-

publican Party for the office of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, but for the sake of harmony within the party, withdrew just prior to the election in favor of Prof. Ezra Carr, the nominee of the Republican Party, who was elected.

Mr. Guinn's connection with the Los Angeles city school system began in 1881, when he was appointed superintendent of the city schools. This office he held until 1883, when he engaged in the mercantile business for a time. In 1904 he was elected to the Non-Partisan Board of Education, and for ten years was a member of this body, serving as president for one year.

Mr. Guinn is probably best known as a historian, and especially is he an authority on the history of this city and Southern California in general. He has written three large volumes on local history, one of which is "The Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California," published in 1915. This work contains a history of California from its earliest settlement through the first years of the twentieth century. It also contains biographies of well-known citizens of the past and present. It also bears the title of "Los Angeles and Environs."

The book of which Mr. Guinn is himself most proud was published in 1907 and bears the title, "A History of California, and an Extended History of Its Southern Coast Counties."

As a founder of the Historical Society of Southern California and as an active member, he has furthered his reputation as a historian. On November 1, 1883, Mr. Guinn was one of twenty-two men to found this organization. Today but three are living, Col. E. W. Jones, Dr. J. P. Widney and Mr. J. M. Guinn, who is the only charter member now connected with the Society.

Throughout the entire history of the Society he has been one of its most active members. From 1883 to 1890 he was treasurer of the organization, from 1890-1891 he was president, from 1892 until the present time he has been secretary and curator, and during the entire history of the organization he has served on the Board of Directors.

Not only has Mr. Guinn been active in the Society as an officer, but he has been the most frequent contributor to its annual publication. His first article appeared in the publication of 1888, and since that time nearly one hundred contributions have appeared, five of which appeared in the last issue.

A partial list, grouped according to the different phases of California history, is as follows:

BEFORE THE CONQUEST—"California Under the Rule of Spain and Mexico"; "Pioneer Courts and Judges of California"; "The Passing of the Old Pueblo"; "Los Angeles in the Adobe Age"; "The Old Pueblo Archives."

CONQUEST OF CALIFORNIA—"Capture of Monterey, October 19, 1842"; "The Siege and Capture of Los Angeles, September, 1846"; "Captain Jedediah Smith, The Pathfinder of the Sierras"; "Fort Moore."

EARLY DAYS IN CALIFORNIA—"In the Days of '49"; "Early Postal Service of California"; "Pioneer Railroads of Southern California"; "Los Angeles in the Later '60s and Early '70s"; "The Sonoran Migration."

HISTORY OF INDUSTRIES IN CALIFORNIA—"From Cattle Range to Orange Grove"; "Some Early California Industries that Failed"; "The Gold Placers of Los Angeles County."

HISTORIES OF THE RANCHOS—"The Passing of the Rancho"; "History of the Cahuenga Valley and the Rancho La Brea"; "Passing of the Cattle Barons of California"; "The Romance of Rancho Realty."

CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS—"Beginnings of the Los Angeles School System"; "Pioneer School Superintendents of Los Angeles"; "Old Time Schools and School Masters of Los Angeles"; "A Plea for Local History Teaching in the Schools."

LOS ANGELES HISTORY—"The Story of a Plaza"; "The Old Highways of Los Angeles"; "Pioneer Ads and Advertisers"; "The Pioneer Directory of Los Angeles"; "Historic Seaports of Los Angeles"; "La Estrella, The Pioneer Newspaper of Los Angeles"; "The True History of Central Park"; "The Passing of Historic Street Names"; "How the Area of Los Angeles City Was Expanded"; "From Pueblo to Ciudad (From Town to City)."

Miscellaneous Group of Incidents of Interest that are not Recorded Elsewhere and that Might Otherwise be Lost—"How California Escaped State Division"; "The Poetry of the Argonauts"; "The Lost Islands of San Pedro Bay"; "The Lost Mines of Santa Catalina Island"; "The Great Real Estate Boom of 1887"; "The Pony Express"; "El Cañon Perdido"; "Some California Place Names"; "Las Salinas"; "A Forgotten Landmark"; "The Myth of Gold Lake"; "Some Historic Fads and Fakes"; "Thirty-three Years of History Activities"; "Camel Caravans of the American Deserts."

In addition to these papers and the three histories, viz: A History of Los Angeles County, A History of California To Its Division Into Counties, with an extended history of the Southern Coast Counties, and A History of Los Angeles and Environs, Mr. Guinn has written a number of historical sketches for newspapers and magazines and has also delivered a number of addresses on historical subjects and kindred topics.

He is now in the forty-ninth year of his continuous residence in Los Angeles County. He has watched its wonderful growth and made frequent note for publication of its rapid development. He has witnessed the city's increase in population from five thousand

to half a million. His long residence in Southern California and a careful study of the history and resources of its counties has made him an authority on its history.

Mr. Guinn has been a member of the American Historical Association for twenty-five years. He was president of the Pacific Branch of that Association in 1913. He is also a member of the California Historical Survey Commission. He was appointed by Governor Johnson in 1915 as the representative of Southern California.

The three histories were issued in quarto form and range from four hundred to five hundred pages per volume. They were sold by subscription. In the preparation of these books, Mr. Guinn read thousands of pages of the old archives of the early periods. Very few historians have consulted these. It is to be regretted that his fugitive sketches have not been collected into book form. They are worth preserving in durable shape and they illustrate some phases of early pueblo life little known.